EquaHeart

Physical activity (exercise for heart health)

Regular physical activity strengthens the heart, lowers blood pressure and blood glucose, and improves cholesterol, mood and sleep. Every amount counts, and it is never too late to start.

1 Weekly recommendations for adults



Aerobic activity

Moderate to vigorous intensity, e.g. **30 minutes on 5 days a week**, accumulated in sessions of any length, such as brisk walking or cycling.



Muscle strengthening

At least **2 days a week**, using weights, resistance bands or body-weight exercises.



Reduce sedentary time

Limit sitting to **8 hours or less** a day, including no more than 3 hours of recreational screen time. Break up long periods of sitting.

Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. Adults aged 65 and older, particularly those with reduced mobility, should also include **balance** activities to help prevent falls.

2 Measuring intensity: the talk test

Light	Moderate	Vigorous
You can talk and sing comfortably.	You can talk, but cannot sing.	You can say only a few words before pausing for breath.

Only about **46%** of Canadian adults meet the 150-minute recommendation. Any increase in activity is beneficial.

3 Getting started

- Begin at your current level; even 10 minutes of walking is a worthwhile start. Increase gradually.
- Choose activities you enjoy, ideally with others.
- Build movement into daily life: use the stairs, and walk or cycle for short trips.
- Include a brief warm-up and cool-down.

4 Examples of moderate activity

Brisk walking · Cycling · Swimming · Dancing · Yard work · Climbing stairs

5 If you have a heart condition

- Speak with your care team before starting activity more intense than you are used to.
- After a heart attack or heart procedure, or with heart failure, ask about **cardiac rehabilitation**, a supervised exercise and education program.

! **Stop and rest** if you experience chest discomfort, unusual shortness of breath, dizziness, or a racing or irregular heartbeat. **Call 911** if chest discomfort does not resolve with rest.

Sources: Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults (18–64, 65+), 2020. Public Health Agency of Canada, Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep Indicators, 2025 (CHMS 2022–2024). Lung Health Foundation, Exercise intensity talk test.

This guide is general information and does not replace advice from your healthcare provider.

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Updated November 2026